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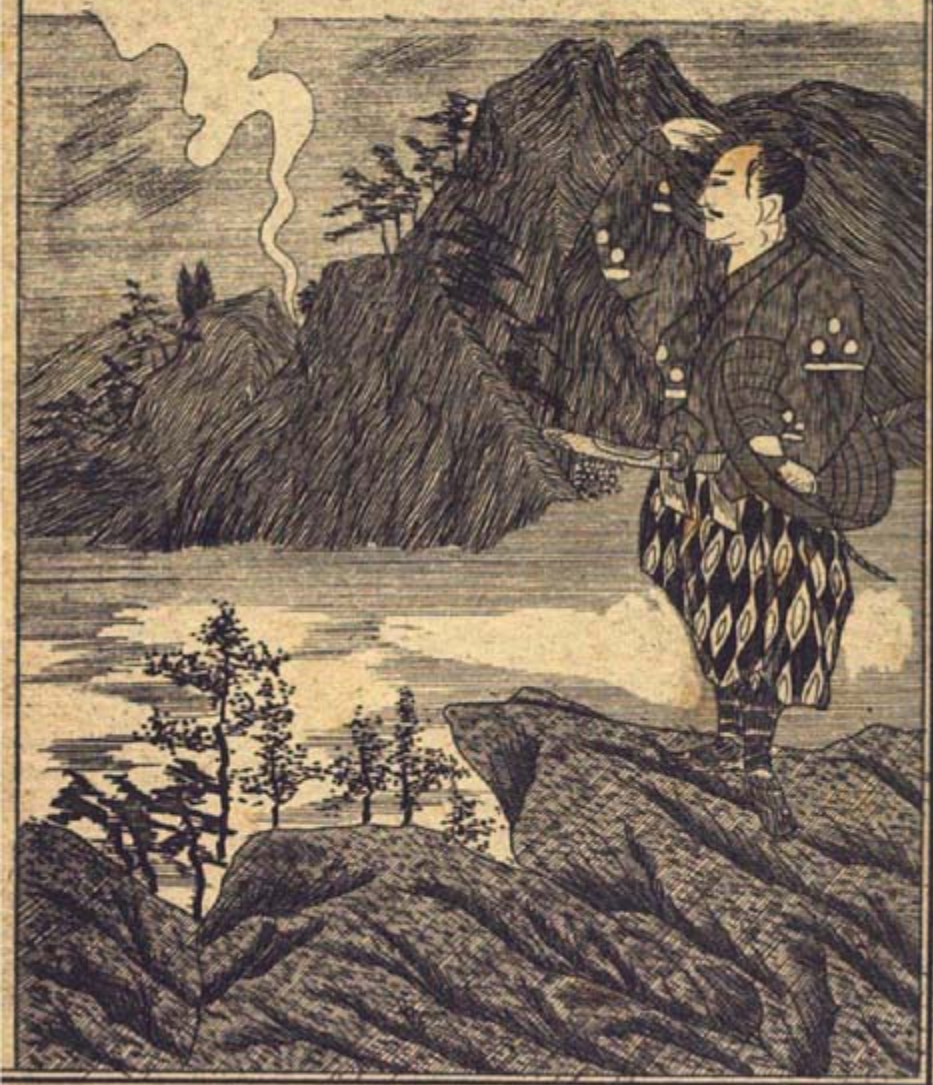
LORD YORIMITSU AND HIS LADY

A Devil's Arm Lost, And A Devil's Head Gained

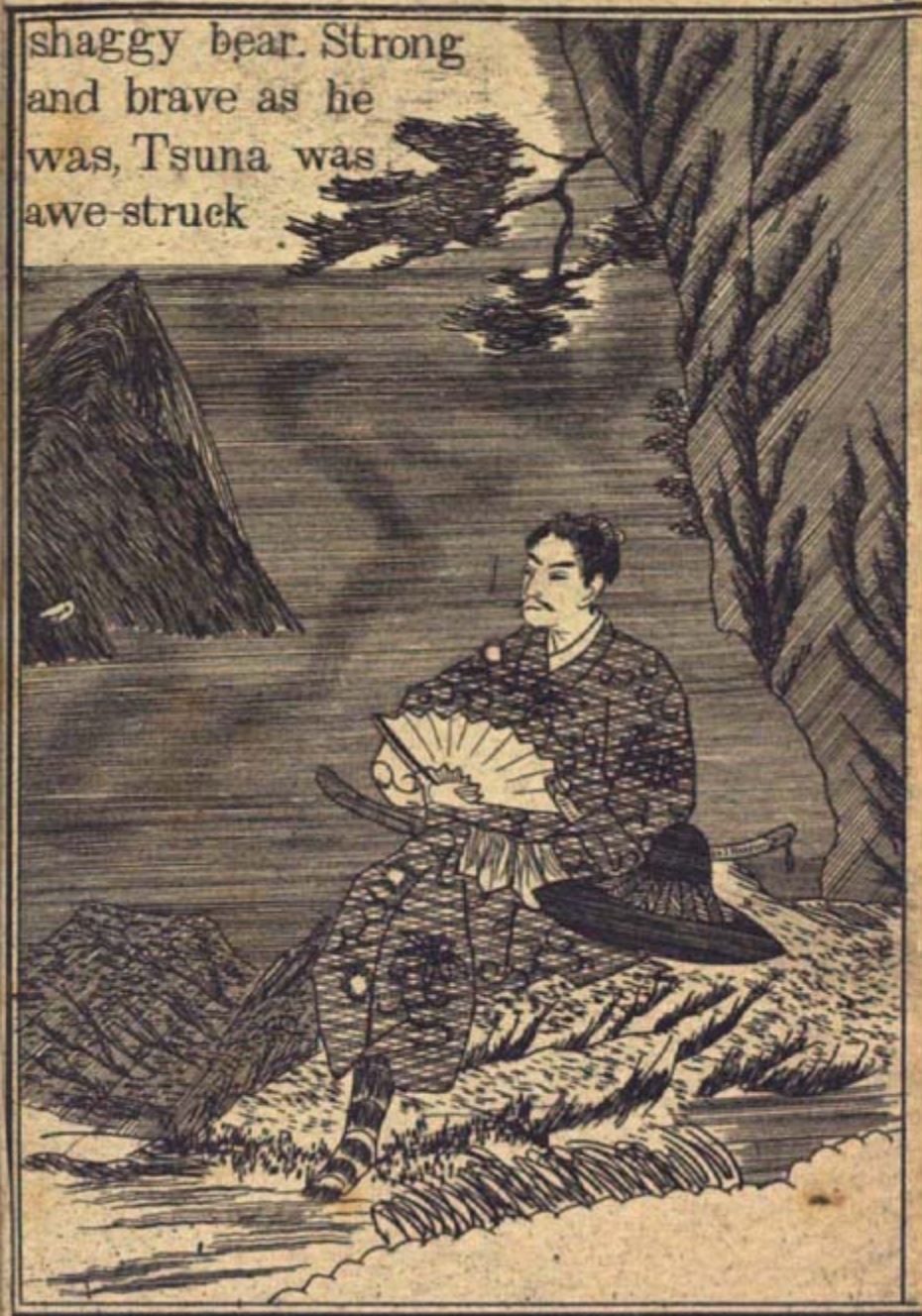
§"Don't you see that smoke curling up to the heavens?" exclaimed General Yorimitsu, the greatest hero of ancient Japan, as he was travelling with a young warrior named Tsuna Watanabe, in one of the narrow passes of the Ashigara Mountains. §"Yes, my lord" answered Tsuna, "but it is strange that we should see the smoke rising out there. I am afraid, the place is haunted, or else inhabited by strong bands of robbers."

§"Either is welcome," returned the hero, "you just go ahead and see about it. I will follow you as soon as I finish my pipe." § Tsuna pushed his way through the shrubs and thorns, now climbing up, now clambering down abrupt slopes and steep rocks, until he came to a valley where there was a single tall tree, near

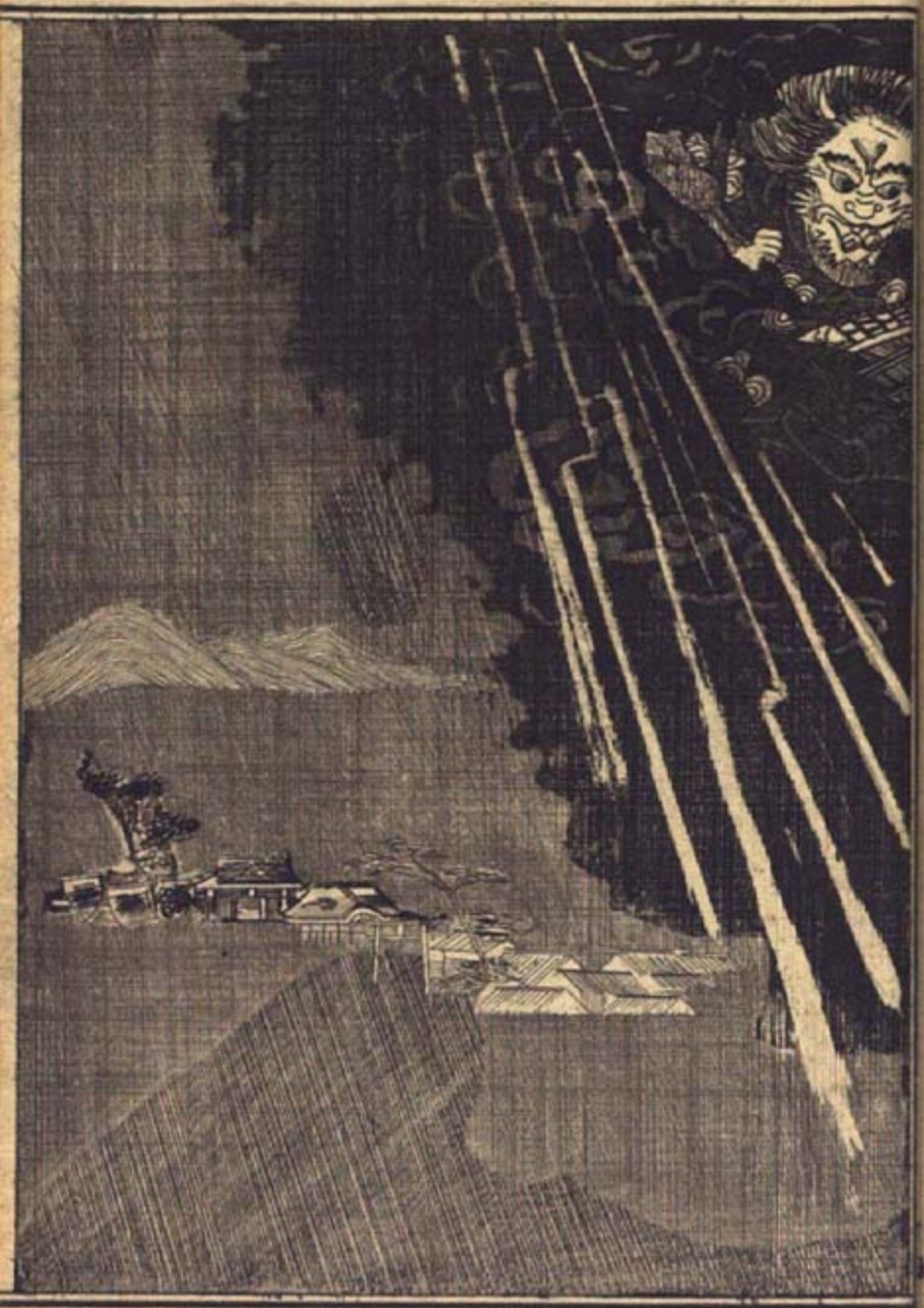
which stood a pretty little hut. There he saw an old woman quietly sitting in the shade of the tree and before her, a child some six years old, fighting with a wild



shaggy bear. Strong and brave as he was, Tsuna was awe-struck

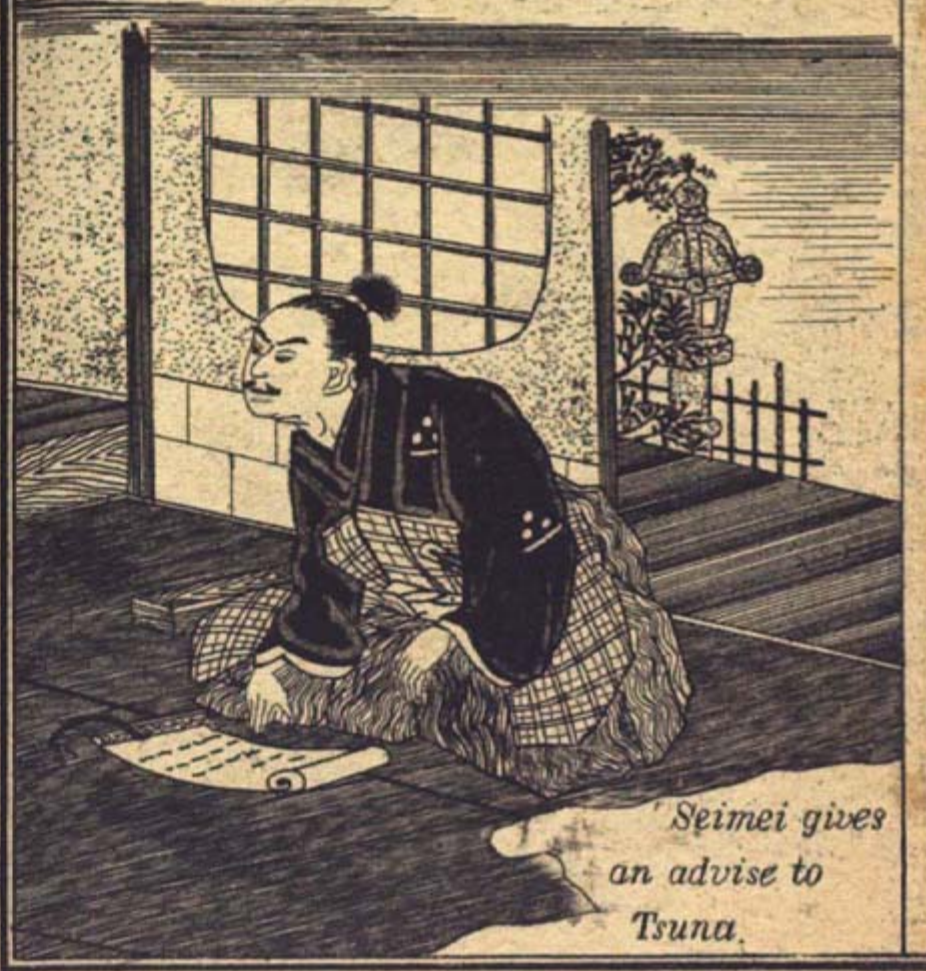


Yamamba is a kind of nymph.



with the scene and muttered to himself, "She is Yamamba! and I am no match for her." But soon regaining his usual courage he drew his sword, boldly stepped up to them, and commanded them in the name of Yorimitsu to submit. § The old woman

smiled and said that his sword was not sharp enough to match his courage and fidelity to his master, but she would let him take her only son, as Yorimitsu might soon have much to do with devils and monsters. The general was only too glad to have such a

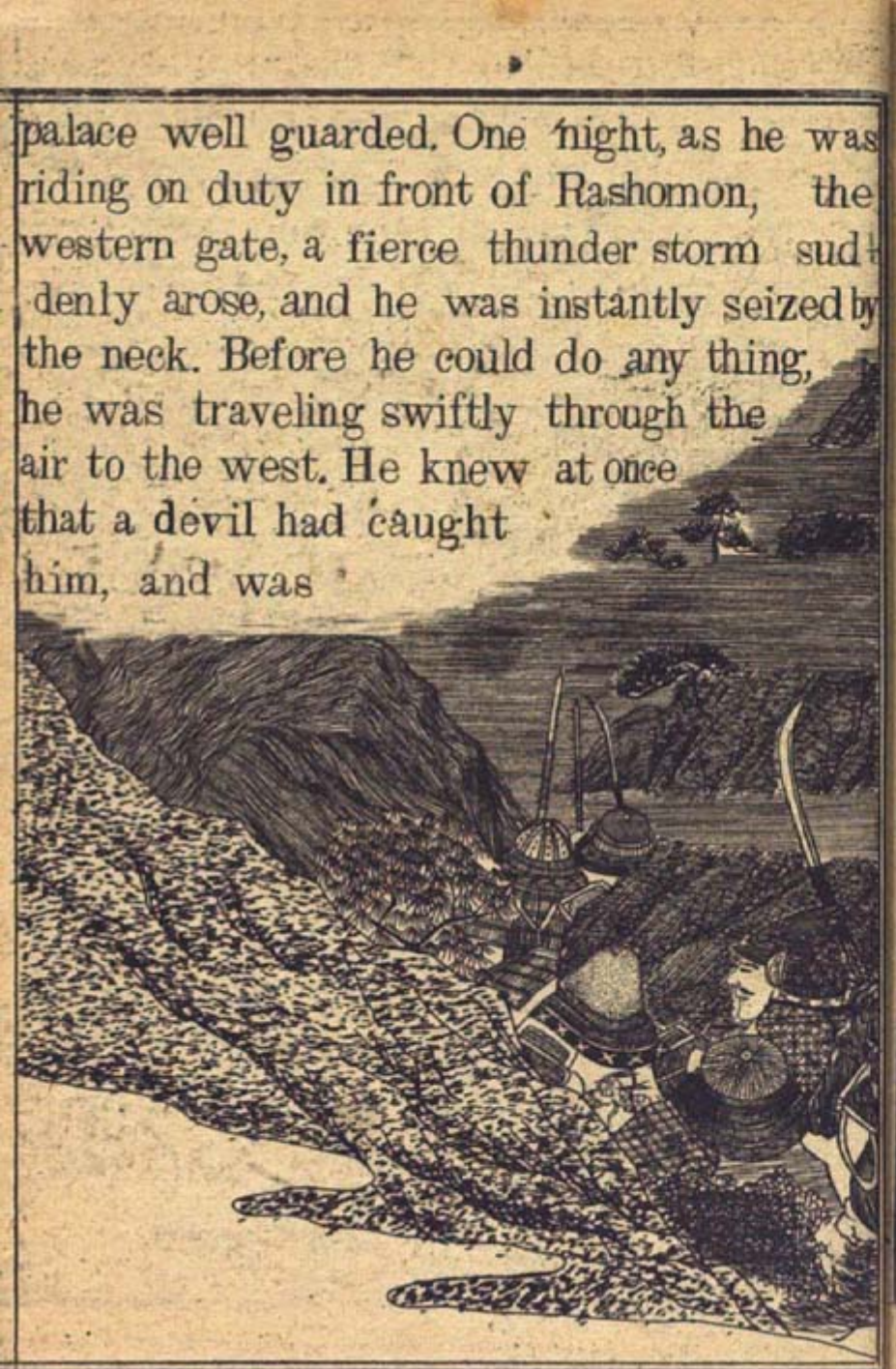


Seimei gives an advise to Tsuna.

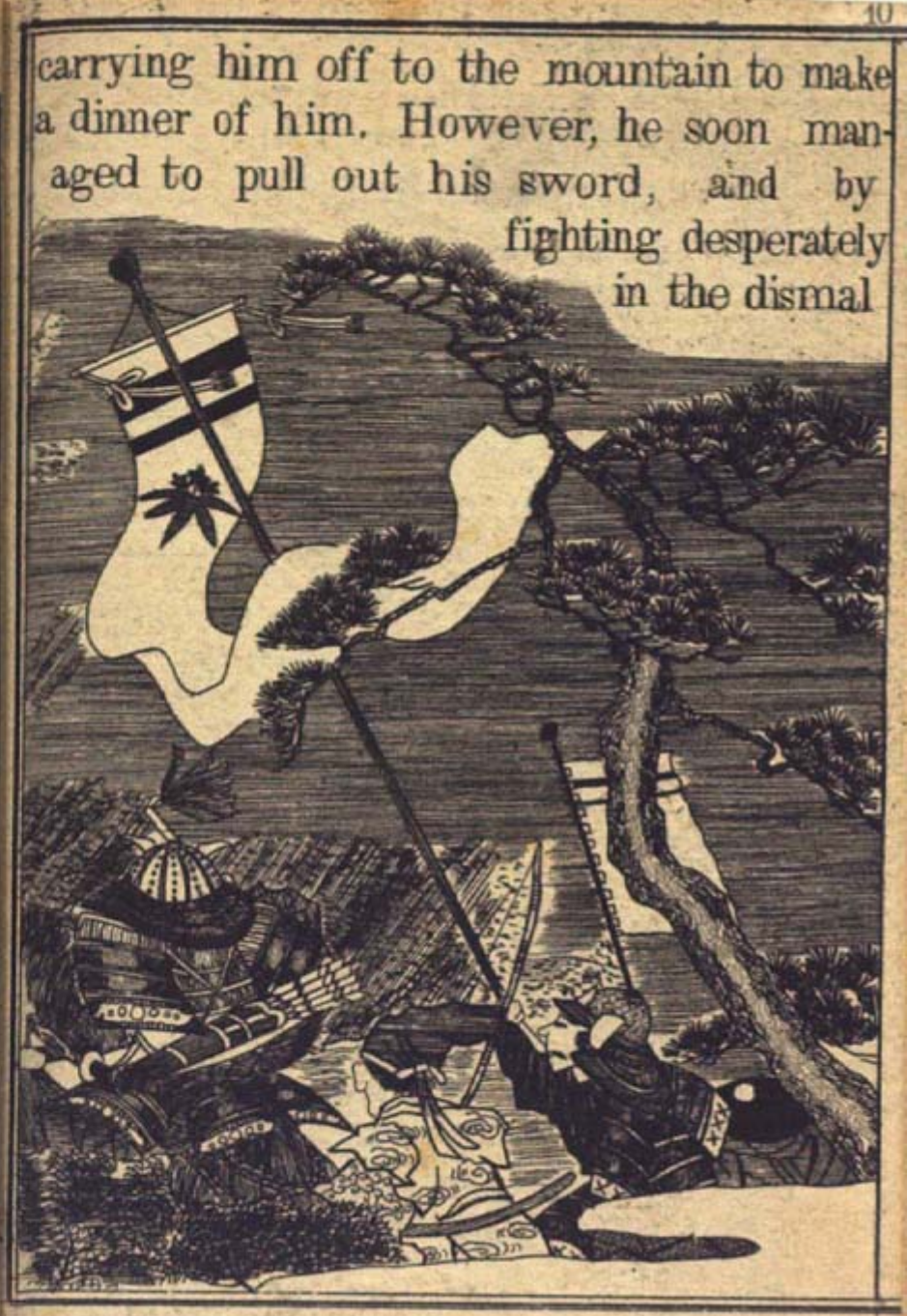
child and called him Kintoki, "fortune of a prince." With joy and satisfaction, Yorimitsu and Tsuna, accompanied by the son of Yamamba started for their home at Kyoto, then the capital of the Japanese empire. § On their way they met the emperor's messengers who bade them return as soon as possible, because the palace as well as the whole city was troubled day and night by imps and devils under the lead of Shutendoji their chief. § When they got back however they found that the devils had already fled to Oyeyama, one of the rocky sterile heights of Tamba. But Tsuna was commanded by Yorimitsu to see that all the gates of the

The devil in the disguise of Tsuna's Aunt.

palace well guarded. One night, as he was riding on duty in front of Rashomon, the western gate, a fierce thunder storm suddenly arose, and he was instantly seized by the neck. Before he could do any thing, he was traveling swiftly through the air to the west. He knew at once that a devil had caught him, and was



carrying him off to the mountain to make a dinner of him. However, he soon managed to pull out his sword, and by fighting desperately in the dismal



clouds, he succeeded at last in cut-
ting off his enemy's arm. Then with
the devil's arm hanging from
his hair,
the brave
warrior fell to the roof of
the Shrine of Kitano-Tenjin,
about two miles from the gate.
A certain wise man called Seimei
advised Tsuna to take good
care of the arm and
not to let the devil
get it back until

a week had passed. For, if
he should recover it
during
that

time, he could easily have it replaced and healed. Of course, his fellow fiends would congratulate him on such an event and do for him any thing which he wanted. Being a devil, he would wish

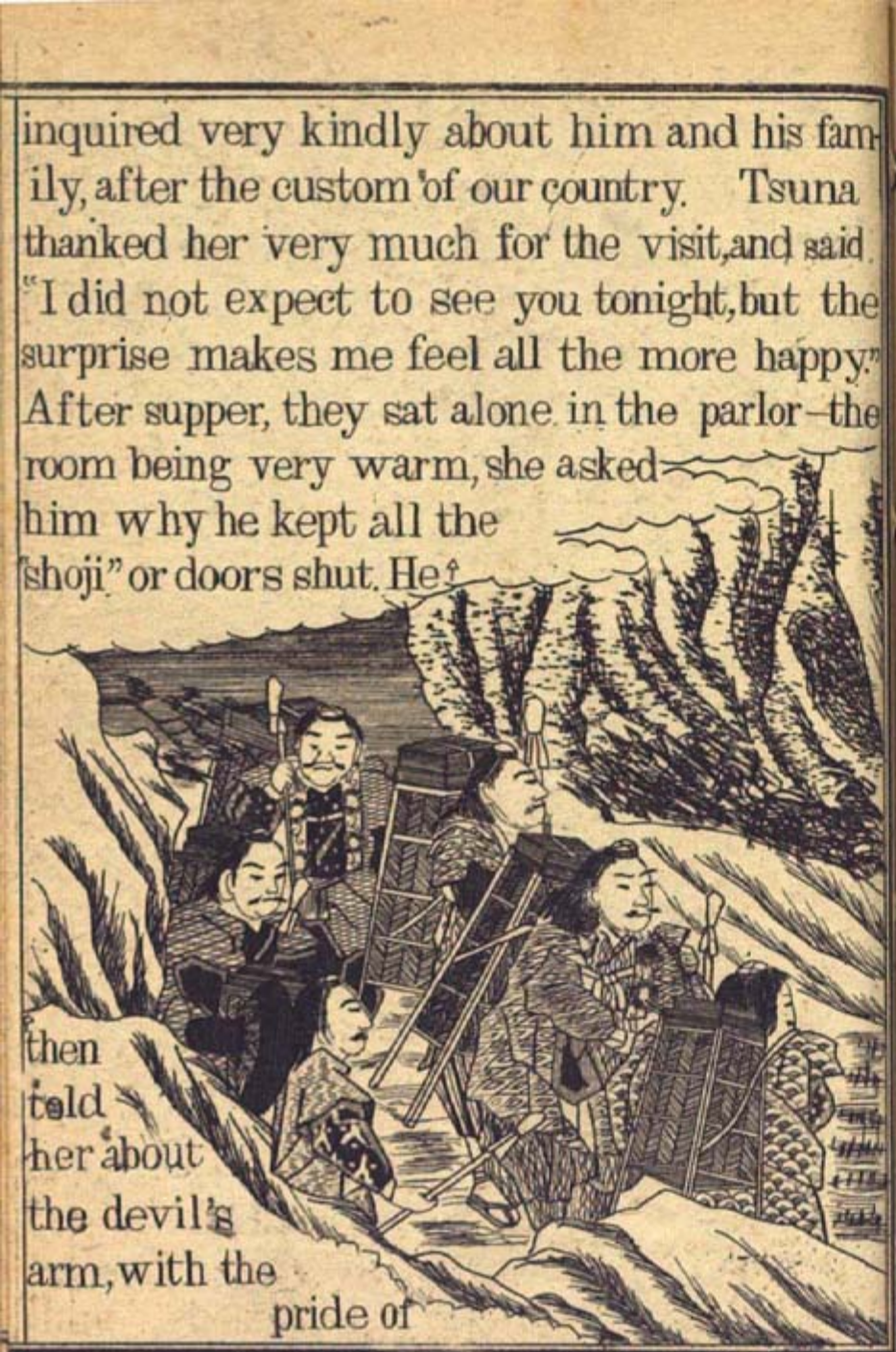
nothing but fearful revenge on Tsuna and the whole

Disguised as pilgrims, the Heroes start

city. § Grateful for his kind advise the young warrior put the arm in a stone case and sat by it day and night, allowing no body to call on him and his family. But on the sixth day, at dusk, he thought he

heard a rap at his door and the gentle voice of his dear aunt calling him by a pet name. So, he went to the gate and, as he had expected, found her. § In a rapture of joy, he flung open the door, and let her come in. She seemed much pleased to see him and

inquired very kindly about him and his family, after the custom of our country. Tsuna thanked her very much for the visit, and said "I did not expect to see you tonight, but the surprise makes me feel all the more happy." After supper, they sat alone in the parlor—the room being very warm, she asked him why he kept all the "shoji" or doors shut. He then told her about the devil's arm, with the pride of



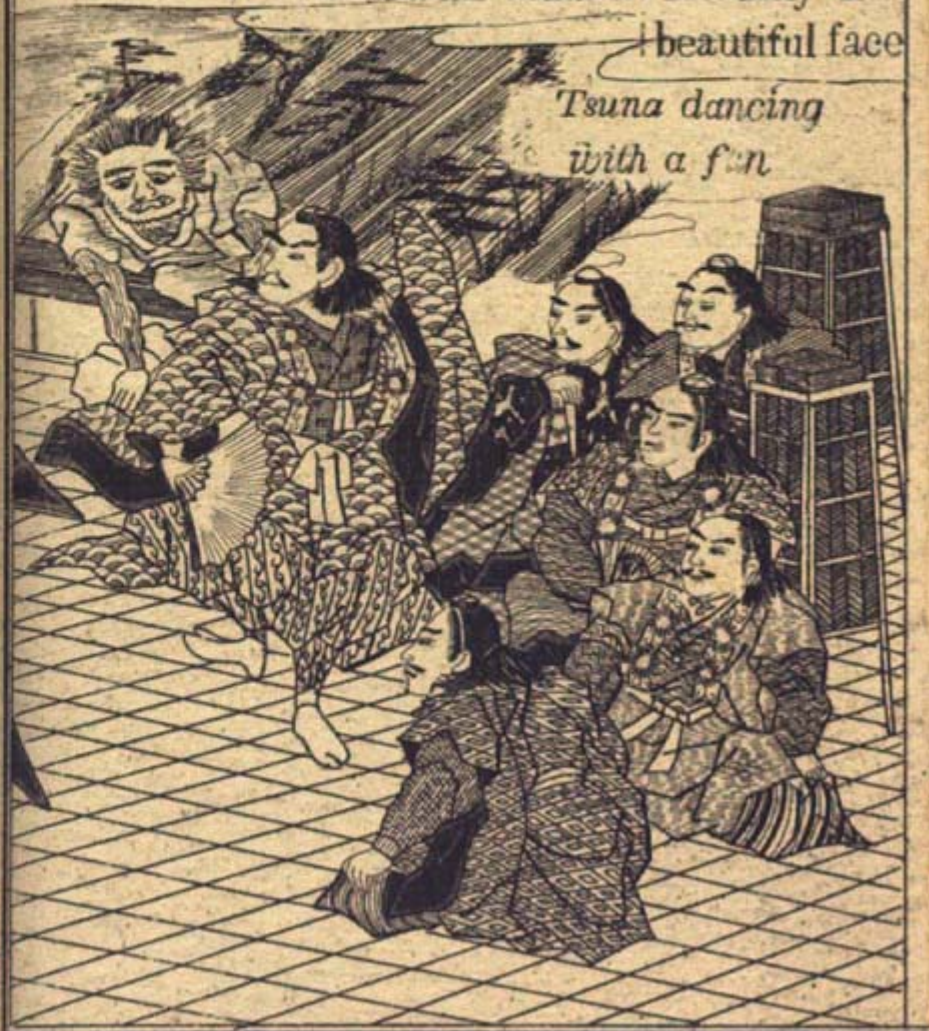
a military man. She wanted very much to see

it, but he told her that she had better wait till the day after tomorrow. Then she rather jeered at him, and

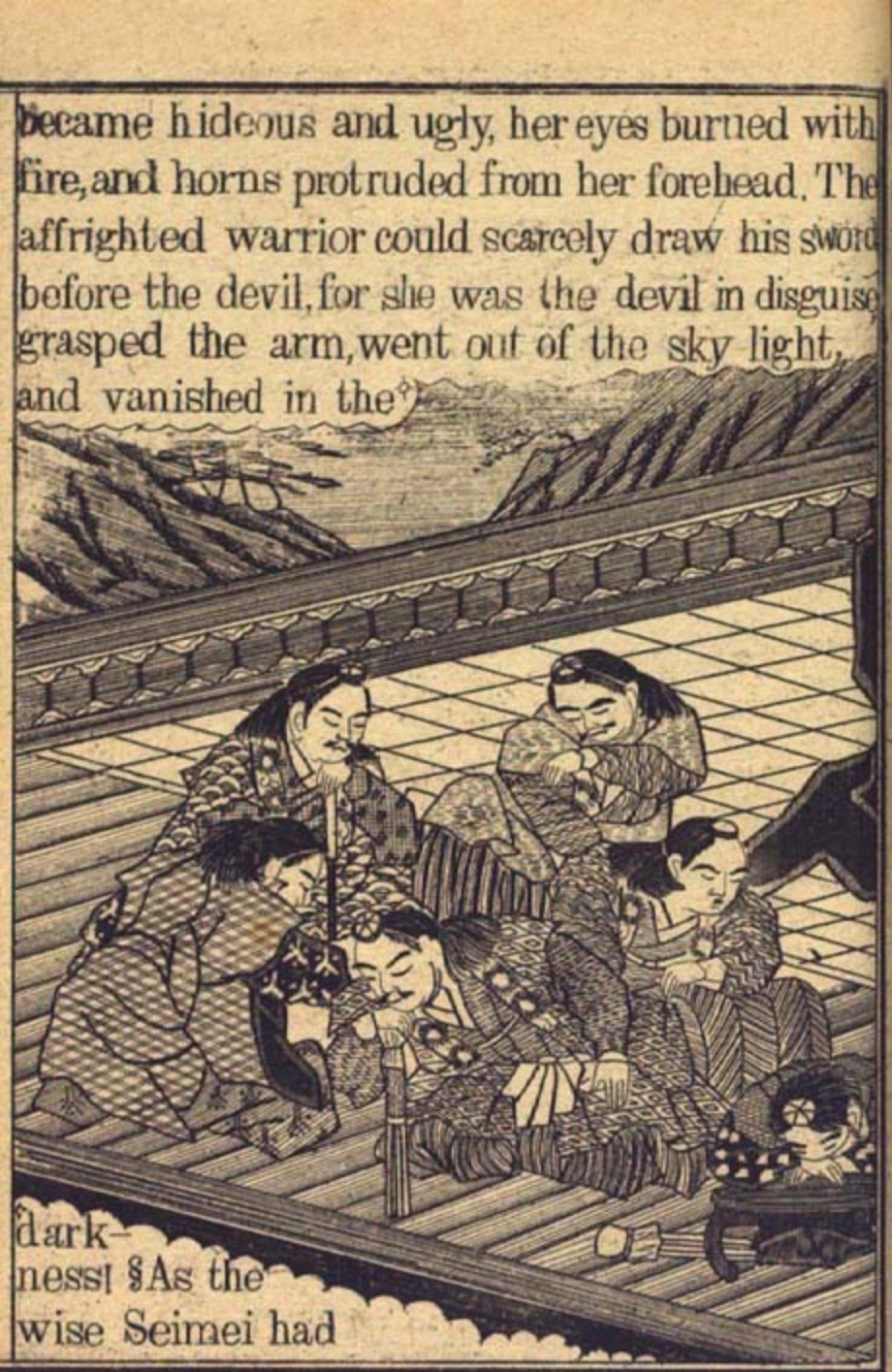
hinted that if he had been really so brave as to have won the combat and carried off the arm in triumph

he had no need of such a useless caution when he was wide awake, and had his trusty sword by him. At this, his young blood was stirred, for his pride was somewhat wounded; and opening the case he let her see the arm. But instantly her beautiful face

Tsuna dancing with a fan



became hideous and ugly, her eyes burned with fire, and horns protruded from her forehead. The affrighted warrior could scarcely draw his sword before the devil, for she was the devil in disguise, grasped the arm, went out of the sky light, and vanished in the

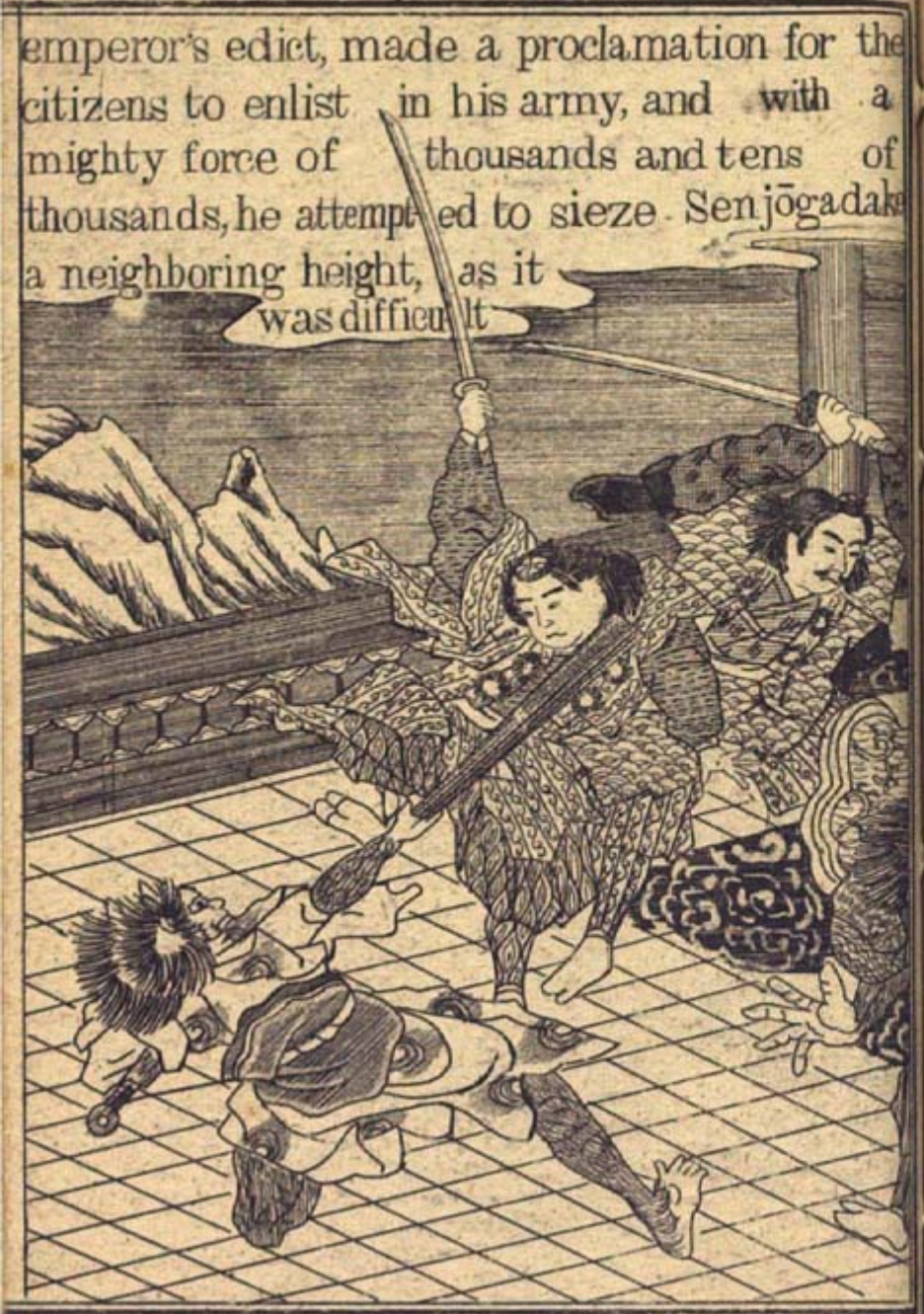


darkness! As the wise Seimei had

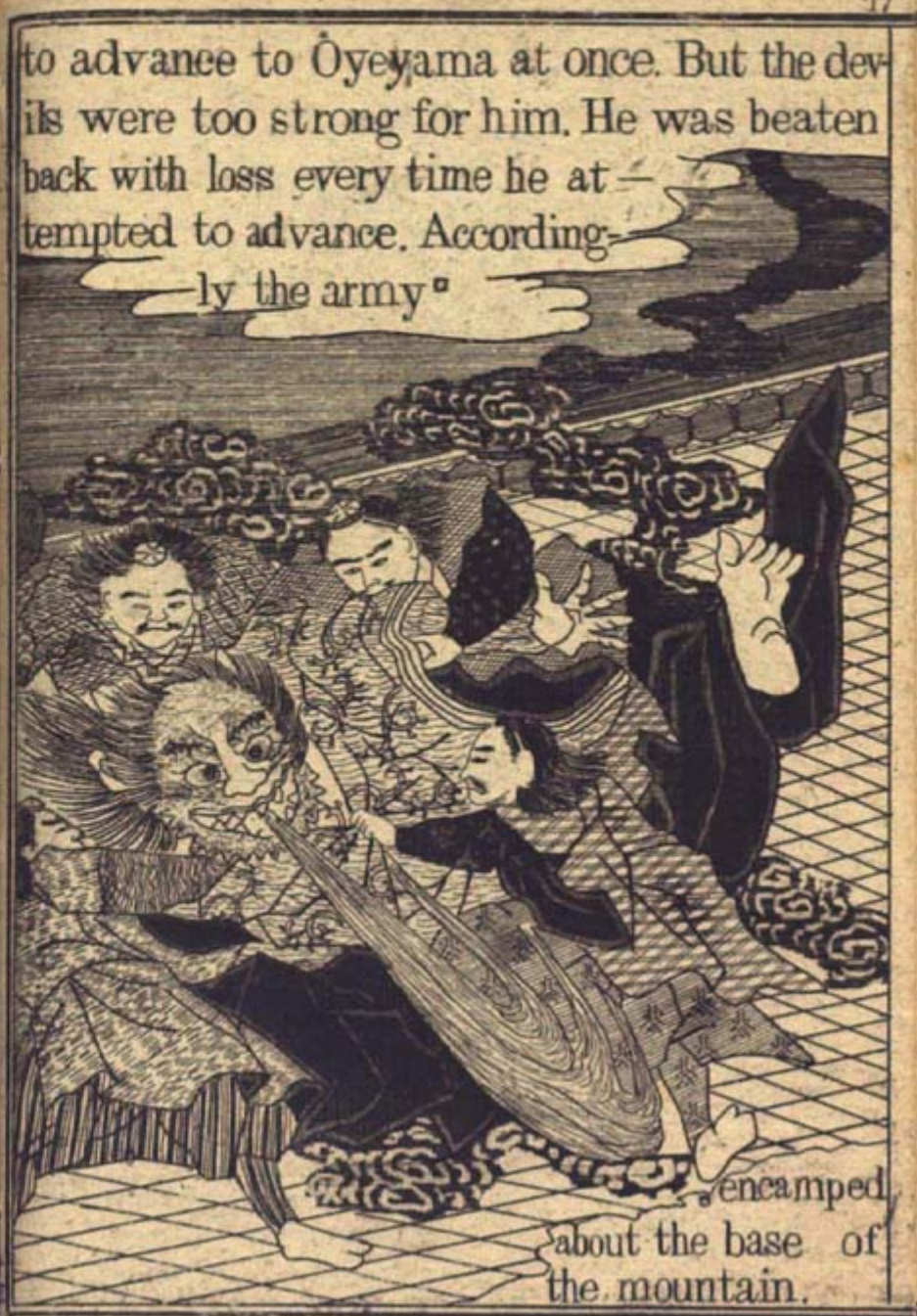
predicted, the devils began to show a hostility fiercer than ever, and it was high time to

destroy them and their haunts. Yorimitsu, in obedience to the

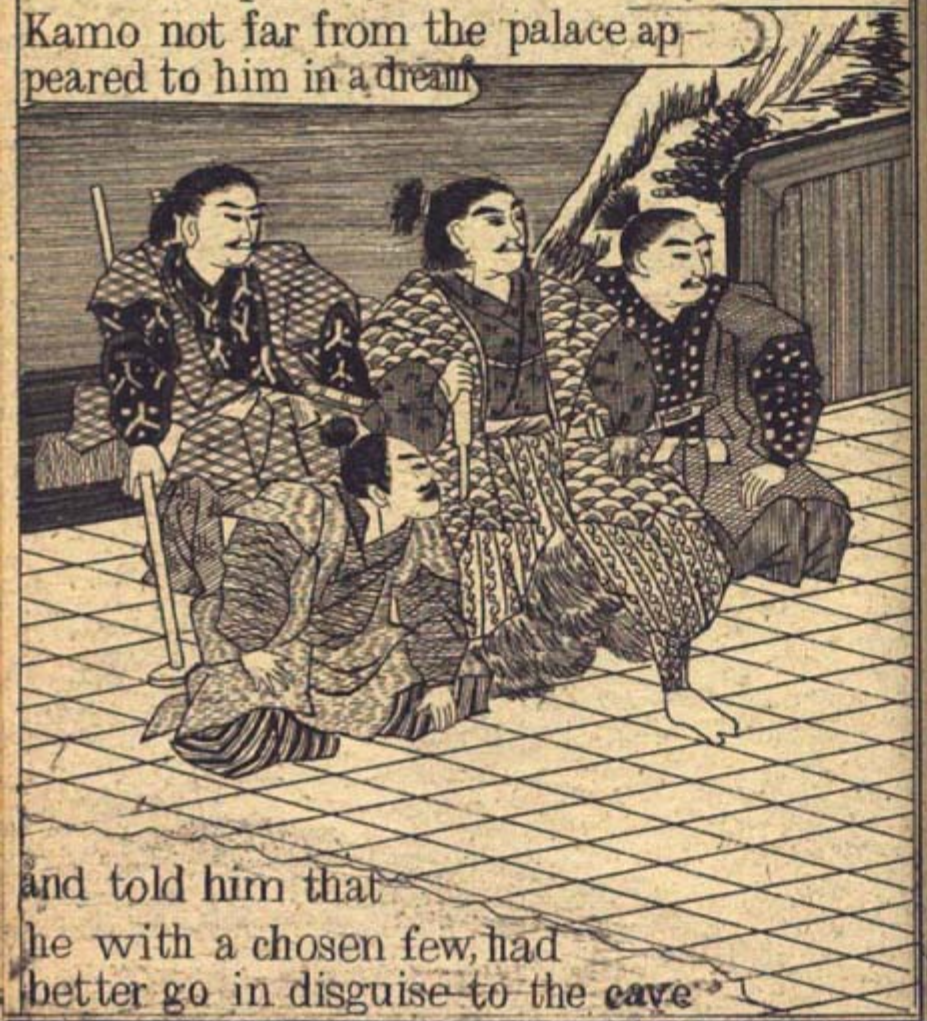
emperor's edict, made a proclamation for the citizens to enlist in his army, and with a mighty force of thousands and tens of thousands, he attempted to sieze Senjōgadake a neighboring height, as it was difficult



to advance to Ōyeyama at once. But the devils were too strong for him. He was beaten back with loss every time he attempted to advance. Accordingly the army encamped about the base of the mountain.



§The poor general was at his wits' end, and sincerely regretted the loss of the devil's arm. One night, while he was musing in his tent, he fell into a trance. The "Wise God" of Kamo whose temple still stands at the village of Kamo not far from the palace appeared to him in a dream



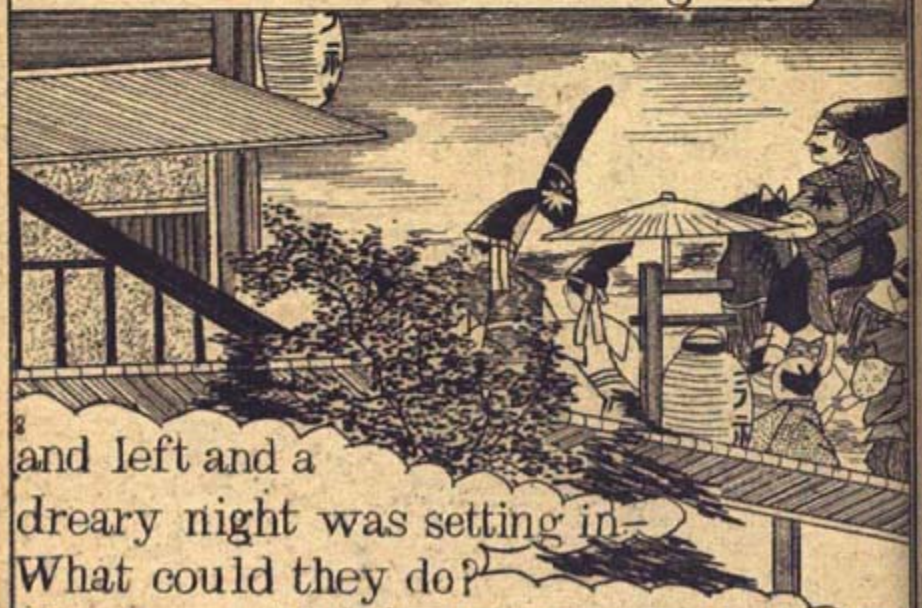
and told him that he with a chosen few, had better go in disguise to the cave

of Shutendoji in Oyeyama and kill the leaders first, or else it would be impossible to conquer the devils in battle. The god also promised to help him.

The Heroes releasing the Captives.

§ In a few days with Tsuna, Kintoki and three

others, he started for the den of the devils! Disguised as pilgrims, they each carried a long stick. They travelled for many many days, because the road to the cave was very dangerous, and more winding than any ordinary mountain path. At last, they lost their way in the forest, in a dark mist. A deep stream was roaring precipitously before them, and rugged slopes and broken rocks rose almost perpendicularly behind them. The trees were thick on the right



and left and a dreary night was setting in. What could they do? But worse than all this, they could already

smell the scent of fresh human blood, which told but too clearly that they were quite close to the demons' cave. Their anxiety was great indeed, for in thus wandering to and fro, they might cause the suspicion of their deadly foes. In the midst of all ther perplexities, they spied a woman at the water's brink far down the stream. As caravans mad with thirst rush at the mirage of a lake, so they ran towards her, for they were most eager to learn their road. They saw that she was a beautiful wirgin dressed

like a maid of honor at the court, but what was their horror to find that she was washing red clothes dyed with the life blood of some human victims! However she told them very kindly the roads to the cave of Shutendoji, for she was so influenced by the god of Yorimitsu. § When we say cave or haunt of Shutendoji, you must not suppose that it was a place dark and dismal.

The Empereror Praising the Heroes.

without either furniture or carpets. Nor should you think that it was wholly under-ground. His cave was his castle cut out of the solid rock, something like the Natural fortress of Gibraltar, only three fourths of the building were sunk deep into the ground, and

had many secret tunnels, hundreds of miles long. § The brave little band of six heroes, soon came in sight of the cave. Its massive iron gates rose high into the clouds, each guarded by two huge devils. They politely saluted the gate-keepers, and told them that they were pilgrims who had unfortunately lost their way in the neighboring forest, and besought one night's lodging. One of the devils went inside while the other questioned them sharply. § Their brave hearts beat high, when they were at length admitted into the castle and without any suspicion whatever, brought before Shutendoji who was now feasting and merry with wine. They thanked him very much for his hospitality, and presented him with some rare strong drink which they had taken with them on purpose. When the liquor was poured into his cup, it blushed like a fair maiden, but all the while, it was secretly raging like a venomous serpent. However the fiend did not know about its deadly effects or rather cared little about them, so he

took half a dozen cups at once and said it was very good wine. Then Tsuna, by his permission, danced to the great delight of all present. But the chief was already very sleepy with wine; and before Tsuna finished dancing, he was fast asleep, leaning his enormous head on a lady's lap. In the mean time, most of the devils and captive ladies withdrew into their own apartments, while the heroes remained near the door, pretending to be drowsy with intoxication. § As the inmates were retiring some thought that they had better show the guests to bed, but others said that they were only pilgrims and that they were already sound asleep and well enough off as they were. All left the room except one fierce-looking devil of gigantic size, who sat by his master's side with a huge iron bar, occasionally casting a glance at the disguised heroes. The latter then thought that they must do quick work with Shutendoji. Accordingly one of the heroes pretending to be ill, called for some

water. This was to make the attendant devil run for some, which he did. As he was returning with a silver basin of water, Kintoki suddenly sprang upon him and they struggled for mastery, while the other heroes rushed into the hall and attacked the chief. Yorimitsu read to him the emperor's warrant and then cut off his head. The head instantly rose into the air, and emitting deadly flames, flew at the hero, who received it on the edge of his sword. Then they killed most of the principal fiends in the castle, and released all the prisoners, among whom were many young ladies of high rank. The next morning, the army was withdrawn from Senjōgadake. The emperor heard of this within two hours, and heralds at once ran through the streets, proclaiming the glad tidings. § In the midst of congratulations and shouts of joy the heroes arrived at Kyoto bearing the enormous head of Shutendoji, and followed by the grateful train

of men, and women, whom their valor had rescued. They say, it was a grand sight and I believe it must have been so.

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